

SAN DIEGO COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
KEARNY MESA JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY
INSPECTION REPORT
2008 inspection; completed in July 2009

Facility Name: KEARNY MESA JUVENILE
DETENTION FACILITY (KMJDF)

Inspection Date: 7/15/2009
Last Inspection Date: 12/13/07

Superintendent: Yvette Klepin, Probation Director
Address: 2801 Meadow Lark Drive
San Diego, CA 92123

Telephone Number: (858) 694-4500
Fax (858) 694-4333

Type of Facility: Juvenile Hall

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge:
Honorable Susan Huguenor

Staff Interviewed: Yvette Klepin
RN
Education Staff
Dietary Staff

Total Bed Capacity: 359

Juvenile Justice Commission Chair: Jessica St.Clair

Commission Inspection Team:
Kathleen Edwards, Ed.D.
Kellie McKenzie

Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Replace beds with platform-style beds to reduce suicide attempts via asphyxiation. Superintendent Klepin is pursuing all avenues to obtain "safe beds."
2. Review policies and procedures re: suicide watch. Example of proposed change would be continuous checks by staff rather than 15-minute checks. Additionally, juveniles on suicide watch need to be in rooms with larger windows for better visual contact by staff. Replace doorknobs inside suicide watch rooms.
3. Review cleaning procedures for concrete floors. Floor area around food serving trays and in dining area was dirty. It appeared that a finish coat of some sort was on these floors, but might need to be stripped and steam cleaned before resurfacing.
4. Include parents in health screening on intake to garner additional information re: medications and medical conditions.
5. Review policy for timeliness of removing food trays from day rooms after meals.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Has the facility exceeded capacity since the last inspection?

No. Capacity is about 300, but on our visit there were 205 boys and 63 girls. More home supervision and transfers to East Mesa ease any potential crowding.

Does the facility house minors under Section 601 Welfare & Institutions Code?

Both Section 601 and Section 602 minors are housed in Kearny Mesa Facility, but in separate areas of the facility. Booking and Release areas are also separate. Some minors serve time only on weekends. In 2008, the Section 601 minors are required to write an essay for the Judge on good choices.

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SINCE THE LAST INSPECTION INDICATE:

Number of Suicides: 0

Number of Deaths from other causes: 0

Number of Attempted Suicides: 9

Number of Escapes: 0

LOCAL INSPECTIONS

Fire Inspection: April 23, 2009

Medical/Mental Health: March 2009

Environmental Health: March 2009

Nutritional Health: March 2009

Date of Last Fire Drill: 7/05/09

Disaster Drills twice a year: 5/08 and 10/08

SLEEPING ROOMS (Cells)

Comments:

There are ten living units housed in Kearney Mesa. Units 400 and 500 are nonfunctioning. Unit 200 is now used to house the younger 12-13 year old boys. Therefore, although The Board of Corrections has placed the capacity at 359, occupancy typically runs under 300. On the day of inspection there were 268 juveniles housed at Kearny Mesa.

STAFFING

Staff to Child Ratio: Awake and Sleeping

Staff: child ratio is 1:10 during waking hours and 1:30 during sleeping hours.

Communication in language minor can understand? Yes.

English is the primary language spoken by minors, followed by Spanish. Many of the staff is bilingual in Spanish and English. If needed for translation with families or minors, the facility uses a service called Interpretalk which is a telephone translation service. If needed, translators will come in person to the facility. For deaf/hard of hearing minors or families, American Sign Language interpreters are provided

Diversity of Staff:

Kearny Mesa's staff members represent diverse ethnicities and cultures, including Hispanic, Middle Eastern, Pacific Islanders, Asian, Caucasian and African-American.

Staff/Minor Interactions:

As part of JCPF (Juvenile Probation and Camp Funding), correctional officers are assigned small caseloads of juveniles and meet with them a minimum of once per week. During this meeting, a service plan is initiated to address behavior while the minor is in custody and high-risk behaviors when the minor is released.

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Staff Interviews – Comments:

Yvette Klepin, Superintendent – Ms. Klepin was organized and accommodating. All staff to be interviewed was present with the exception of the psychologist who met with us later in the day. We interviewed dietary staff, medical staff, education staff, and probation staff. All expressed concerns about the budget reductions. Dietary staff reported some changes had to be made to the menu to accommodate less funding. Education staff is evaluating possibility of additional funding from escrow program to make up for budget cuts.

CONDITIONS OF GROUNDS

Lawns, playing fields, blacktop, asphalt and other:

This facility lacks any green space, garden areas or trees. There is no field for ball sports, only a blacktop area. Eventually, this facility will need to be replaced with one which has more outdoor living space for 300 active minors. There is a field outside of the black top area.

EXTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

General condition, paint, roof, drains/gutters, etc.:

Exterior of the building has been maintained as well as possible when age and number of remodels are considered. The close quarters of living/recreation areas is surrounded by barbed wire and concertina wire.

INTERIOR OF BUILDINGS

Walls, paint, floors, drains, plumbing fixtures, air vents, windows, etc.:

During the past year, it was reported that locks were changed, classrooms were gutted and remodeled, areas were painted, air ducts were cleaned and the administration area was improved. That said, the facility is aging and the County Board of Supervisors will need to add the KMJDF to its list of those buildings needing replacement.

Are cleaning fluids and chemicals labeled and safely stored?

All cleaning fluids and chemicals were stored in locked areas and away from juveniles.

Weapons locker location:

No weapons are allowed in the facility. Law enforcement officers who bring juveniles in for booking lock their weapons in the Sally Port or lock them in the trunk of their patrol cars

Recreation/Sports equipment:

Volleyball nets and a playing field were visible during the tour. Day rooms were large and adequate for the population.

Are the hallways clear and doors propped open?

The hallway in the dining area still had lunch warming carts and dirty dishes. This was about 2PM, long after lunch.

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Court Holding Area:

Juveniles from other facilities awaiting court hearings were provided with clean rooms, separate from the general population.

Sleeping rooms/dormitories:

Sleeping rooms are dark with concrete floors. Not all rooms had a desk. Personal items were not noted. Lighting seemed insufficient for homework, reading, or letter writing. Due to the small room size, toilets are close to the bunks.

Beds:

Beds in some areas are metal platform beds with a mattress. All beds are 12" from the floor. The Director explained that the beds have been a source of suicide attempts in the past year. Minors use an item of clothing or sheet to attempt asphyxiation. The Director would like to replace these beds with platform beds which provide no opportunity to affix strangulation material.

Art, books, personal possessions allowed in sleeping rooms?

This Commissioner did not observe any personal items in sleeping areas, although minors are allowed books, photos and personal toiletries.

Graffiti present?

Graffiti was present on plastic windows to sleeping rooms and on the walls of the rooms. This graffiti abatement is a constant issue.

Ample blankets?

Blanket supply seems adequate. Minors have one blanket and may receive another on request.

Study area:

Students have homework and are allowed to do homework in sleeping rooms or day room. Pencils are allowed in sleeping rooms, but are confiscated if safety is an issue.

Adequate lighting?

Although it was noted that new lighting was added to sleeping rooms in 2007, they still seemed to be too dark to read, do homework or write letters. Other lighting was adequate.

Temperature:

Temperature was comfortable throughout the facility on walk-through.

ORIENTATION OF MINORS

Are minors oriented to rules and procedures?

Each juvenile receives an individual copy of the rules when they are booked into the facility. Correctional officers discuss the rules with each juvenile as well as explaining the cover command.

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Are rules and grievance procedures posted?

There is a clear process for filing a grievance. This process is reviewed during orientation and is written in the handbook. Each grievance is recorded and a response given to the griever. The rules and grievance procedures are posted on each unit.

Are rules and grievance procedures understood by minors?

Minors appear to understand grievance procedures. As of June 2006, grievances are numbered which has resulted in an increase of grievances filed. Every grievance filed is heard at some level.

Minors interviewed – Comments:

Two female minors were interviewed for the purpose of this inspection. They were cooperative and respectful. Their favorite thing about the KM facility is school. They spoke at length about their completion of GED work and enrollment in online community college classes. They are proud of their accomplishments and appreciate all the work of their teachers in making this happen.

The girls were less complimentary of the food. Their main complaint is that the portions are smaller than they used to be.

The grievance procedure was a hot topic with the interviewed girls. They were aware of the process of a grievance. They were not always happy with the outcome of the grievance hearing as might be expected.

MEALS/NUTRITION

Kitchen – Clean; are knives and chemicals locked?

The kitchen was viewed. Knives and chemicals are locked at all times

Have the youths working in the kitchen been trained?

Some females work with food distribution and table set up. They are trained in proper hygiene.

Are meals served or cafeteria style?

Prepared food is brought in from a Central Kitchen. There was a previous problem with food temperature being too low due to food sitting un-served for too long. This has been corrected and trays of food are not brought out until juveniles are ready to eat.

Are minors permitted to converse during meals?

Minors are permitted to hold conversations after every juvenile is served.

Is Staff present and supervising?

Staff is present and supervises during all meals

Is weekly menu prepared? Is it posted?

Weekly menus are prepared and posted on the refrigerators in the unit. If a juvenile requires a special diet secondary to a chronic disease such as diabetes, this is ordered through the medical clinic and the food is then prepared according to specifications in the kitchen.

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Are servings ample, nutritious and appetizing?

The inspection occurred between mealtimes, preventing the opportunity to inspect meals. However, the posted menu indicated that servings are generous and the meals well-balanced.

Are weaker youths protected from having food taken from them?

Meals are supervised, and food stealing is not permitted. Weaker youth are monitored by staff and seated near cooperative minors.

Length of time allowed for eating?

30 minutes.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF MINORS

Appearance?

Both male and female minors appeared well groomed. They are outfitted in plain pants and T-shirts. The color of the T-shirt has significance regarding status of the juvenile. For example, female juveniles wear maroon; high security juveniles wear orange and must be accompanied by Probation staff.

Showers – Frequency? Privacy maintained? Supervised by Staff? Any assault by other youth?

Daily showers are permitted. In an attempt to lower humidity levels, some privacy windows were removed. This allows viewing of minors from hallway. Adequate venting should be investigated to allow for greater personal privacy.

Condition of clothing – Does clothing fit? Is it appropriate to weather?

Clothing is loose fitting and appropriate to the weather.

PROGRAMS

Recreation – types and amount each day:

Recreation time is provided in compliance with Title 15 requirements. Juveniles do calisthenics, and some team sports.

Exercise – Daily schedule and amount of time each day:

In accordance with Title 15 regulations, juveniles have one hour of physical education in the morning during their school hours and one hour in the afternoon supervised by Probation.

Access to Religious Services?

Juveniles that choose to participate have access to religious services. There is a request form box to allow juveniles to request a particular religious mentor. There is one optional non-denominational service each week by volunteer clergy. Many of the juveniles note Catholic as their religion of choice, but no weekly mass is scheduled at this time.

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Medical/Mental Health services:

It is interesting to note that in the 2007 inspection report, 10-15% of juveniles were reported to be on psychotropic medication. At this year's inspection, it was reported that 15-20% of the juveniles are on psychotropic medication. Obviously, there are more mentally ill juveniles in detention than last year.

CFMG (California Forensic Medical Group) manages all medical and mental health services with onsite staff and contracts with Children's Hospital and Sharp Hospital. It was of some concern to learn that the initial health screening involves interview with only the juvenile. Juveniles are not always good health/mental health reporters. It may be prudent to combine this interview with a family interview so as not to miss chronic or emergent medical/mental health issues or medication needs.

Volunteer Program:

Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous provide volunteer services. Clergy also volunteer time to provide non-denominational religious service. Juveniles may also request a specific clergy person.

Counseling and Casework:

Casework is done through Probation staff. CFMG has onsite mental health staff. If a juvenile or staff person feels a mental health evaluation is needed, it is reported to this mental health staff. Additionally, it was noted that CFMG uses this staff to provide teleconference services to other juvenile detention facilities. The security of these confidential communications needs to be evaluated.

Family Reunification Planning:

Visits by family are encouraged. Regular visiting hours are held each Thursday and Sunday.

Substance Abuse counseling:

Substance Abuse education and counseling is part of the program on all units. Spectrum provides drug counseling, and volunteers from NA and AA hold meetings in the units.

Victim Awareness classes:

A high percentage of juveniles have been the victim of a violent crime. Victim Awareness education continues to be a part of the regular programming in all units. In addition, Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) program is once per week in all units.

Gang Awareness classes:

Gang Awareness education is an integral part of the daily programming in all units.

Sexual Harassment classes:

Sexual Harassment education is presented on a daily basis. Each day, the correctional officer or detainee reads a statement defining sexual harassment and explaining what to do if a juvenile believes they are being sexually harassed. These allegations are taken very seriously.

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DISCIPLINE OF MINORS

Frequency and type:

Consequences for misbehavior vary from insight essays to counseling to short-term room confinement (2 hours) to longer time confinement (up to 5 days). Confinement excludes school and mandatory exercise periods, but limits participation in recreational activities. Superintendent Klepin pointed out that the Safety Room had been used two times, while the Restraint Chair was used one time in the past year. This is a reduction in need for juvenile restraint and Ms. Klepin and her staff should be commended. Ms. Klepin attributes this reduction in restraints to increased staff training in proactive methods of defusing potentially violent situations.

GRIEVANCES

Number and type:

Thirteen hundred grievances were filed in this inspection year. Most grievances are filed for mark downs, school homework, and food quality. All juveniles are oriented to the grievance upon entrance into the facility. Grievances are collected and reviewed on a daily basis. The grievance is reviewed and outcomes relayed back to juveniles.

TELEPHONE

Access:

Juveniles have, at a minimum, weekly phone privileges. Juveniles are required to call collect. Some minors receive county paid phone calls based upon court order and needs of child.

CORRESPONDENCE

Is Postage Free? Is incoming and/or outgoing mail read? Is there confidential correspondence?

Postage is provided free of charge to juveniles. Juveniles' incoming mail is only read if they are on mail restriction; in those cases, correctional officers follow the proper procedure. Correspondence is otherwise confidential.

VISITING

Is there adequate space, convenient times or accommodations to parent work schedule, etc. special visits? Does staff supervise visits? Is there adequate privacy?

Space is provided for family or professional visits. Staff keeps visual contact, but conversations are confidential.

Have all minors had visits?

All minors are provided the opportunity for visitation and have visits unless they have no family or the family chooses not to come. Siblings that are over 21 years old may visit. Other visitors are considered by staff on a case by case visit. Visitors who arrive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or are hostile to the staff, will be turned away for that visitation time.

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SCHOOL

Teachers – Number of full-time; frequency of substitutions:

The school program is year round and staffed with 20 full-time contracted teachers. There are three full time Special Education teachers and one part-time teacher. Because of the year-round schedule, substitute teachers are on site most days to cover for full-time staff vacations and sick leave. The school year is 185 days.

Number of minors in school/per classroom:

The school program is administered jointly with GRF by the San Diego County Office of Education. About 300 students (including GRF) participate in the school program. Of these 300 students, approximately 28% are on active Special Education status. About 250 of these students are residents of KMJDF on any given day. There are 15 classrooms with a maximum of 15 students in each room. A maximum of 20 minors attend "Day rooms." All minors are required to attend school.

Number of minors on independent study:

There are no students currently on independent study.

Atmosphere of classroom:

It must be noted that, under the direction of Supervisor Klepin, the School Program has flourished this past year. The teachers have designed an effective program to provide GED and college credit classes for students. This will continue to be an emphasis for 2009.

Adequate supplies? Books, paper, computers, etc.:

Supplies are somewhat limited due to current budget situation at County Office of Education. Teachers supplement needed supplies as well as they can. The computer situation is improving and by next year additional computers will be available.

Activities and coursework:

Coursework is grade appropriate and individualized according to the needs of the students whose educational needs are individually assessed. The education program is standards based ("Power Standards") and the teachers teach to the required standards.

Are minors required to do homework?

Some homework is required, but the majority of work is done within classroom hours.

Number of minors not attending. Reason?

All juveniles at KMJDF are required to have educational instruction. Juveniles can be suspended up to five days for such things as fighting or threatening behavior. Staff and school personnel at the facility view education as a collaborative effort, and there is little fighting in the school setting.

Relationship between the school and KMJDF staff:

Leadership is supportive of the collaborative effort between school and facility staff, and both groups have worked to support juveniles. The staff is innovated and dedicated to the success of the juveniles in their classrooms.

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Describe access to school, recreation, exercise and recreation for minors confined to their rooms:

Juveniles who are confined to their rooms are required to attend school and are allowed access to supervised exercise.

ACCESS TO MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There is access to both medical and mental health services. Newly booked juveniles are screened at time of intake and receive a physical within 48 hours of admission. There are boxes throughout the living areas for juveniles to fill out a medical request. These are collected by nursing staff every 4 hours and are triaged for medical staff, i.e., nurse visit, physician assistant visit, or M.D. visit. Emergency medical and mental health issues are responded to within 20 minutes. The medical team works closely with Public Health regarding public health issues such as STDs and positive PPDs (tuberculosis skin test). Juveniles are referred for mental health services in variety of ways, including self referrals, referrals from probation officers, correctional officers, parents, medical team, etc. The mental health team provides crisis intervention and stabilization, which may require ongoing care during time at KMJDF. The medical team is also available during visiting hours to allow for interaction with families of the juveniles.

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